DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 441 493 IR 057 764

AUTHOR Riedy, Allen
TITLE Southeast Asia Newspaper Collecting in the United States.
PUB DATE 1999-08-00
NOTE 9p.; In: IFLA Council and General Conference. Conference Programme and Proceedings (65th, Bangkok, Thailand, August 20-28, 1999); see IR 057 674.
AVAILABLE FROM For full text: http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla65/papers/136-140e.htm.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cooperative Programs; Foreign Countries; Library Acquisition; Library Collection Development; *Library Collections; Library Cooperation; Library Technical Processes; Microfilm; *Newspapers; Preservation
IDENTIFIERS Asia (Southeast); United States

ABSTRACT

Libraries in the United States have generally been successful in collecting the major metropolitan newspapers from Southeast Asia. They have been less than successful in collecting regional and specialty newspapers. Issues surrounding newspaper collecting include: identification; acquisition; processing, shelving, and storage; and preservation, including availability of microfiche. The economics of newspaper collecting place severe limitations on the ability of libraries to collect; however, cooperative projects among institutions and new national and international initiatives may alleviate the problem. (Author/MES)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 441 493

IFLANET
Search Contacts
International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
Annual Conference

65th IFLA Council and General Conference

Bangkok, Thailand,
August 20 - August 28, 1999

Conference Proceedings

Code Number: 136-140-E
Division Number: V
Professional Group: Newspapers
Joint Meeting with: -
Meeting Number: 140
Simultaneous Interpretation: *No*

Southeast Asia Newspaper Collecting in the United States

Allen Riedy
Cornell University
Ithaca, New York, USA

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

A.L. Van Wesermael

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Abstract

Libraries in the United States have generally been successful in collecting the major metropolitan newspapers from Southeast Asia. They have been less than successful in collecting regional and specialty newspapers. Issues surrounding newspaper collecting include identification, acquisition, processing, and preservation. The economics of newspaper collecting place severe limitations on the ability of libraries to collect; however, cooperative projects among institutions and new national and international initiatives may alleviate the problem.

Paper

Coming to Terms

On its newspaper website the Library of Congress defines a newspaper as "a serial publication which is mainly designed to be a primary source of written information on current events, either local , national of international in scope. It contains a broad range of news on all subjects and activities and is not limited to any specific subject matter. Newspapers are intended either for the general public or for a particular ethnic, cultural or national group[1]." This statement serves as a fine intellectual definition of a newspaper, but in deciding what is a newspaper for bibliographic purposes, libraries consider other factors like shelving and its physical characteristics. I mention this because using the bibliographic records in catalogs to determine numbers of newspapers is an imprecise task at best. A recent attempt to compile a list of newspaper titles from Southeast Asia and their holding libraries fell victim to the

IR057764

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

vagaries of U.S. cataloging. For example, where one library cataloged a title as a newspaper (e.g., *Tuoi tre* from Vietnam or *Pelita Brunei* from Brunei), another cataloged it as a journal. So, what are they?

Southeast Asia Newspaper Holdings in the United States

Presently there is no comprehensive list of Southeast Asia newspapers held by U.S. libraries, and the scantiness of data in newspaper bibliographic records makes it very difficult to determine who owns what. Until fairly recently, the subject heading "newspapers" was not commonly used, making it difficult without individual titles in hand to determine the extent of newspaper holdings from an individual country. Many, if not most, libraries do not record newspaper holdings information online, and given the widespread disregard for closing serial records when a publication ceases, it is difficult to determine from online catalogs whether a title is current and if so whether the library still receives it. The table which follows therefore, should be treated with great caution as it merely gives an overall indication of the magnitude of holdings in the U.S.

Number of current newspaper titles held in U.S. Libraries[2]	
Brunei	2
Myanmar (Burma)	5
Cambodia	2
Indonesia	30
Laos	0
Malaysia	8
Philippines	7
Singapore	3
Thailand	8
Vietnam	7

There are perhaps another 10-15 newspapers from Southeast Asia which are received only in microform.

Newspapers from Southeast Asia present librarians with something of a paradox. On the one hand, libraries with large Southeast Asian collections have for some time now have tried to coordinate collecting of newspapers from the region to ensure that not only all important metropolitan/national papers but also significant regional papers are available in the United States. We have been somewhat successful ensuring that important national papers are represented in U.S. libraries. There appear to be few, if any, lacunae in this category.

However, it is undeniable that fewer newspaper titles are being received in the U.S. A survey I did in 1997 indicated total titles held close to 125 (including those received in microform only). This has since dropped to around 75 (including microform titles). They represents both a cutback on the part of libraries due to budget pressures, reliance on web-based online newspapers as a cheap substitute for expensive subscriptions, and the demise of newspapers in the region and the failure of libraries to subscribe to new titles.

Collecting regional newspapers has been a much more problematic venture. With limited budgets, it is difficult to justify to patrons, faculty and library administrators (including collection development officers) the purchase of a relatively obscure regional newspaper whose value may not be readily apparent to the detriment of more immediate needs. In fact, with the exception of Indonesia, current newspapers from outside the capital areas of Southeast Asia are noticeably absent from U.S. library collections. This means scanty news

coverage of places like Mindanao, home to a large Muslim population in the Philippines and long the site of separatist movement; Isan, the Northeastern part of Thailand and home to large ethnic Khmer and Lao populations; and the Malaysian state of Sarawak.

Factors Affecting Strengths and Gaps

The issues facing libraries and researchers who depend on newspapers for research are threefold: 1) identify and acquire major metropolitan and regional newspapers in Southeast Asia; 2) process and make these newspapers accessible to our patrons through our catalogs; and 3) ensure that these newspapers will be available in the future for historical purposes.

Identification

In general, identification of newspapers from Southeast Asia remains a notoriously haphazard affair. Occasionally vendors from the region will report on new newspaper titles, but in these cases the titles are usually general interest newspapers from the major cities, or even only from the capital city. Niche, or special interest newspapers, and regional newspapers are only rarely advertised through the major vendors.

There are some exceptions to this general situation, the most significant of which is the presence of a Library of Congress Office in Jakarta and its attendant participants' program which does provide U.S. libraries with information on new newspapers and will investigate reports from participants of new newspapers. The success of the LC's program in Indonesia where libraries' holdings are fairly extensive can be contrasted to the situation in Thailand where the demise of the participant program there has led to a paucity of information on new titles, though LC has been helping through its office in Bangkok. An LC acquisitions program through its New Delhi Office in Myanmar bodes well for improving our knowledge of the publishing scene there. An interesting development worthwhile watching is the yearly increase in titles offered by Xunhasaba, the quasi-official book export agency of Vietnam. Xunhasaba now offers subscriptions to newspapers from central Vietnam and Hai Phong, as well as more offerings from Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. However, local papers are not yet listed. More frequently, personal contacts inform librarians of new titles, or a traveling faculty member, librarian, or graduate student becomes aware of a "new" newspaper (i.e., one we've never heard of) and alerts others to its existence. In still other cases bibliographic information may be happened upon in the course of browsing through literature from the country or very occasionally from formal notices by the publisher.

The Process of Acquisition

Acting to restrain collection even further is actual acquisition of the paper. Commercial vendors, most of whom are in the major metropolitan area of each country are either unable or unwilling to accept orders for smaller papers since it is likely there will be only one subscription and the cost to service such a subscription will be high. Smaller and regional papers often are not prepared to deal with overseas subscriptions and will not accept them. Again the contrast between Thailand and Indonesia is instructive. In far-flung Indonesia libraries are able to subscribe to and acquire newspapers from fairly remote areas through the offices of the Library of Congress Office in Jakarta. Even at that, as LC regularly informs us, receipt of issues may be spotty. In Thailand, to cite an example very close to home, Cornell University was able to subscribe to 2 newspapers from the South during the operation of the LC program. A subscription from the LC office in Bangkok would be placed and the papers mailed to the Bangkok office whence they were packed and shipped to Cornell. After the demise of the program it was impossible to maintain the subscriptions from the U.S., and the Thai vendor was unwilling to service the subscriptions. Thus, these 2 regional papers became lost to the U.S. In the case of Vietnam, it remains to be seen how flexible Xunhasaba will and can be with special order requests for smaller and regional newspapers. With the establishment of an LC cooperative acquisitions program in Myanmar we are likely to see the expansion of Burmese newspaper titles outside the Rangoon area. Presently all newspapers received in the

U.S. are from Rangoon. Nothing new is on the immediate horizon to relieve the situation in the Philippines.

In cases where the paper is truly wanted and not available through vendors, it is often up to the ingenuity of the librarian to make local arrangements for a subscription and shipping. Sometimes it is possible to make arrangements through an academic institution or library in exchange for cash or publications to collect and mail newspapers. For years Cornell and Yale have used private individuals (expatriates mostly) in Cambodia to supply us with newspapers and other publications. However, these sorts of arrangements have drawbacks. Turnover tends to be high. For monographs this is not a particularly severe problem, but for serials it is. Serials are complicated in many respects (libraries have separate departments within their technical service operations which deal only with serials) and often need follow-up with the distributor or publisher. Our experience in Vietnam particularly has not been good in this regard and we have ended our private agent relationships for serials in favor of the established vendor Xunhasaba who is rather more expensive but also more reliable. Also in some countries, notably Indonesia, Vietnam and Myanmar export of published materials is either restricted or subject to intense bureaucratic scrutiny for non-licensed exporters further dampening efforts and enthusiasm to obtain the newspaper.

The economics of newspaper collection place significant limits on the ability of libraries to collect. Newspapers from overseas are expensive. As an example, consider the Thai daily *Matichon* published in Bangkok. The street price per issue is 8 baht (about 22 cents), or about $80 per year. To receive this paper airmail through a vendor in Bangkok, the price to a U.S. library skyrockets to $1150 per year. However, that is only part of the cost. Fortunately, the Library of Congress microfilms *Matichon* and the film of the newspaper can be purchased for about $350 per year. Thus, our $80 per year newspaper has ballooned to a minimum of $1500, not counting storage and processing costs. Operating on pitifully small budgets, most area collections can afford only a few newspapers.

In fact, *Matichon* is an example of a rather low-cost newspaper where microfilm is available at a reasonable cost. The *Bangkok Post*, which is available from a commercial filmer is the U.S. cost over $2500 this year. The University of Malaya charges a whopping US$150 per reel for the *New Straits Times*. Given the number of reels an annual run of the paper occupies, the cost for one year is over $3,000. The higher prices (though the level is still unjustified) charged by commercial vendors are somewhat understandable given that they are profit making ventures. It is far less understandable why a university library would seek to extract exorbitant sums of money from other libraries.

When film is not available, the institution must make the decision to either hold on to the paper for as long as possible in the hope that someone will eventually film it, toss it when either space runs out or the paper becomes too brittle to use (in this instance, if the institution is the sole holder of the title in the U.S., we lose a resource), or film it. The cost to an institution to film a paper is far higher than the cost of buying the film In 1999, the typical commercial microfilmer in the U.S. charges about $.26 per frame. With a tabloid or smaller size newspaper, 2 pages can fit on a frame. For standard size newspapers only one page will fit on a frame. This cost assumes the newspapers have already been prepared for filming; i.e., collated and target sheets prepared, a not insubstantial task and financial commitment given the quantity of paper that needs filming. For example, the cost to film a year of *Matichon*, not counting preparation costs (target sheets, collating, and searching for missing issues or pages) would run around $4,000.

With the advent of online versions of newspapers, acquisition has acquired a new meaning. It is now possible to access-not possess-a version of a newspaper via the internet. As a source to gather information quickly on current events, the online newspaper is unparalleled; however, its value to a research institution is limited by the fact that typically it is an abridged version of the paper version which is distributed locally, and there is no assurance that the backfiles of the newspaper will be available indefinitely. The online newspaper has a role to play in the

constellation of resources the research library provides, but it is no substitute for the physical paper or an image thereof.

Processing, Shelving, Storage

Processing, storage, and preservation of newspapers remain pressing problems: too few staff are able to read the languages involved, too little space is available to shelve and store the newspapers , and there are insufficient funds to microfilm them.

In one respect the processing of Southeast Asian newspapers-i.e., creating a bibliographic record and recording the receipt of individual issues-is merely a subset of the larger problem of processing all materials from Southeast Asia, namely the question of finding and hiring people with competence in the languages of the region. Despite the large inflow of Indochinese over the past 2 decades, most of the languages of Southeast Asia are not widely spoken in the U.S. In the case of languages using non-roman scripts the situation is even more dire as often 2nd generation immigrants who speak the language do not read it. Finding readers of Lao, Khmer, and Burmese is particularly difficult. Readers of Thai are easier to find; however, the amount of material needing processing is greater. Even when a library manages to get a title cataloged, the problem of checking in individual issues, which frequently do not have issue data in roman script, makes processing of these materials a daily headache. To a lesser extent the other major languages of the region, which are written in roman script, present the same problem, but with a little training library staff are able to process these materials. Beyond finding language-competent people for cataloging and check-in of non-Roman script materials, is the question of hiring people to perform these tasks and given library budgets and backlogs these days, convincing administrators to devote scarce resources to process materials in uncommon languages is an ongoing struggle.

Finally, the library must confront shelving and storage of the newspaper, a major issue if microfilm is unavailable. Space, more accurately its lack, has come to obsess libraries recently. One year of an average size Southeast Asian newspaper such as the Thai newspaper *Matichon* occupies a little over 5 cubic feet of space (another newspaper from Thailand, *Phuchatkan,* eats up 108 cubic feet of space per year), a perhaps trivial amount at first sight, but when multiplied over the several dozen newspapers (from all over the world) a typical large research library subscribes to the yearly consumption of space becomes significant. The accumulation of several years of newspapers creates considerable clutter. Even if space were not an issue, storage of large backfiles of newspapers in large stacks, though still useable, is extremely inconvenient for the user.

Preservation Issues

Presently, microfilm remains the only accepted preservation medium for printed materials. The option of scanning newspapers to create digital images which might then be made available to a wide audience is not at present a realistic preservation alternative to microfilming newspapers. Issues of archiving, refreshing, obsolete technology, and copyright are unresolved. Until we can be certain that scanned images will be available to the researcher 10, 50, 100 years hence, scanning cannot be considered an alternative to microfilm, which if stored properly will last hundreds of years. Like the online versions of newspapers, scanned images of newspapers are another research resource provided by libraries. Its present place in the constellation of resources is the tremendous accessibility it affords to those not physically present in the library where information is stored physically. Its place and that of microfilm are different. They complement one another, but one is not a substitute for the other. Time may-almost certainly will-expand our preservation options, but for now microfilm remains the sole guaranteed option.

Somewhat surprisingly, given the rather *ad hoc* and disorganized filming efforts now in place, about 2/3 of the newspaper titles presently received in paper copy in the U.S. are being filmed on at least an irregular basis, meaning that some agency has taken responsibility for filming

the paper even if it is done on an intermittent basis. It is not the optimal situation, but it is certainly better than I anticipated when I commenced research on this topic.

Availability of Microfilm:

Currently there are several institutions creating microfilm of Southeast Asian newspapers on a regular basis: the Library of Congress in the United States, the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (KITLV) in the Netherlands, and the Ateneo de Manila in the Philippines, and the University of Malaya. The Center for Research Libraries films another 4 newspapers.

In 1994, the Ateneo de Manila was regularly filming 13 newspapers from the Philippines. All are English-language offerings. Nine of the papers are from the metro Manila area and of the remaining 4, 3 are from the Ilokos area of northern Luzon and one from Cebu City in the Visayan region. Thus, of the 13 papers filmed 12 are from the island of Luzon.

In the Netherlands, KITLV through its office in Jakarta, films Indonesian newspapers. KITLV's filming operations are extensive. A recent communication from its office in Jakarta reveals that KITLV is presently filming 62 newspapers. Of these, 14 are also filmed either by the Library of Congress or the Center for Research Libraries. Another 14 represent titles subscribed to in paper by U.S. libraries. The remaining 34 titles are not held in the U.S.; many of these titles are from outside the Jakarta metropolitan area.

The microfilming operations of the Library of Congress are also considerable. In its 1993 publication *Newspapers Received Currently in the Library of Congress*, of the 58 Southeast Asian newspapers listed, 37 are annotated as "Microfilm only." A more recent communication from the LC Jakarta office indicates an additional 2 newspapers from Indonesia are being filmed.

Norman Ross Publishing Inc., a commercial microfilm vendor, is actively exploring microfilming opportunities in Southeast Asia. The firm currently has an extensive catalog of retrospective newspaper titles from all over the world on film. Mr. Ross has approached U.S. libraries and Southeast Asia publishers in an effort to meet the preservation needs of libraries and the financial needs and copyright concerns of publishers to provide affordable film. We eagerly await the results of his efforts.

Cooperative Projects

Within the United States a few cooperative efforts among institutions to film newspapers are underway. Recently, the Library of Congress and Cornell University agreed to divide responsibility for the filming of 5 commonly held Vietnamese newspapers. Cornell will provide the pre-filming labor of collation and preparing target sheet and LC will assume the cost of filming. Because of the nature of our budgets and the availability of student help at Cornell, the division of responsibility makes good economic sense for both institutions. Another cost-sharing arrangement between Cornell and the Southeast Asia Microform Project, a CRL Area Studies Project, is filming older Southeast Asia newspapers from the late 1940s to mid 1980s. Individual universities within CORMOSEA[3] such as Ohio University, University of Washington, and the University of Wisconsin have taken responsibility for the filming of specific newspapers from the region. Regular communication among CORMOSEA members helps individual libraries decide what needs filming, what is worth filming, and eliminates the duplication of efforts.

These efforts, though worthy, are ad hoc and do not meet the demand for a comprehensive and systematic program to preserve newspapers. In May 1997 the Association for Research Libraries (ARL), the Center for Research Libraries (CRL), the Commission on Preservation and Access/Council on Library Resources (CPA/CLR) and the Library of Congress (LC) launched an initiative to remedy the situation by sponsoring a 2-day symposium on the issues

of collecting, providing access, and preserving foreign newspapers in the United States. Out of that symposium grew the International Coalition on Newspapers (ICON), a permanent body of CRL, whose task is to identify and propose strategies to guarantee newspaper access and preservation in the United States. Among its specific objectives are the creation of a global union list of newspapers, the creation of a standard bibliographic record, and the coordination and support preservation projects. [4] As the establishment of ICON is a very recent event, it does not yet have a record to evaluate it.

Concluding Remarks

Fundamental to the question of the acquisition and retention of newspapers is the reason why they are collected in academic research libraries. Two general purposes come to mind: 1) for current and historical research and 2) for non-research related current awareness and recreational reading. In research libraries newspapers are collected primarily to support the curricular and research interests of the institution. For this reason, research libraries need to ensure that the newspapers will be available to their patrons in the future, thus the need for preservation. Academic libraries do subscribe to some newspapers for the recreational reading of their students, particularly in cases where large numbers of students from particular countries attend. For Southeast Asia, we have the situation where a surprisingly large number of institutions without a research or strong curricular interest in the region subscribe to Malaysian newspapers. However, we would not expect those institutions to be particularly concerned with the preservation of these newspapers for historical research.

Historically, depending on the reason(s) for collecting a particular newspaper an institution would exercise one of the following options: 1) subscribe to the hard copy of the newspaper and discard the hard copy when its usefulness as a current awareness source has ended; 2) substitute microfilm for the hard copy when film becomes available; 3) film the newspaper itself; 4) purchase only microfilm when it becomes available.

Previously, where an institution's goals were to provide news for current awareness either because of the type of research being conducted or to meet the needs of international students, there is little choice but to subscribe to a newspaper. Now, the existence of online newspapers and online services, such as Nexis, have made access to these resources a possible alternative. While such services fill a valuable function in their ability to make known quickly the occurrence of events-forgetting for the moment the manner and purposes for which the international student reads his or her local-online services are unable to reproduce much of the content embedded in a newspaper. The newspaper as a transmitter of news to a mass audience purveys information not only through the content of its articles but also profoundly influences the impact of news stories on its audience through the size and style of its headlines, placement of photographs, and placement of articles within the newspaper (p. 1 versus the bottom right of p.6, section D). Contrast the impact on the reader of a large whited-out area on page 1, the result of government censorship, with the mere absence of the article in an online news service. For these reasons, libraries need to subscribe to newspapers as they appear in the street. For historical research we must ensure that at least one institution or consortium subscribes to every important and regional paper and that arrangements on the national level are put in place to ensure preservation of these papers when local resources are inadequate.

While I have generally dismissed online newspapers and scanning technology as substitutes for the newspapers themselves and for microfilming, we still must consider and support efforts to explore new uses to which these new technologies might be put to satisfy some of our users immediate needs and at the same time introduce economies into our newspaper collecting practices. Scanning the hard copy of the newspaper in its entirety and mounting it on a website and then filming the scanned image for preservation might be an option. Assuming copyright issues can be resolved, such a scenario would not only ensure rapid access to information and meet preservation concerns, but would also help alleviate storage problems and reduce the shipping costs of large quantities of paper, a major expense in the acquisition of foreign newspapers. Undoubtedly a variety of scenarios are possible with our present technology and

as technology changes other options will reveal themselves.

Footnotes

[1] Library of Congress. "Foreign Newspapers Currently Received in the Library of Congress." http://lcweb.loc.gov/rr/news/fncr.html p. 1

[2] These numbers and those that follow are approximate and are meant only to give an indication of the scale of U.S. holdings. These figures were compiled from several sources: a national survey by Carol Mitchell of the University of Wisconsin in 1995, a survey by personnel at Cornell of its holdings, personal and official communications from the Library of Congress office in Jakarta, and the valuable, but a bit dated, Newspapers Currently Received in the Library of Congress, 13th ed., 1993.

[3] Committee on Research Materials on Southeast Asia, a committee of the Association for Asian Studies, consists of academic libraries in the United States with significant collections on Southeast Asia.

[4] *Proposal to Establish the International Coalition on Newspapers.* http://www.crl.uchicago.edu/info/icon/proicon.htm

---

Latest Revision: *August 6, 1999*

Copyright © 1995-1999
International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
www.ifla.org